

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing purchasing data, the method comprising:

receiving purchasing data, from a purchasing entity that is a member of a purchasing group, wherein the purchasing data relates to accounting data associated with purchase transactions made by the purchasing entity;

creating a data structure to store the received purchasing data, including creating a first data structure for entity-level purchasing data and creating a second data structure for group-level purchasing data related to the purchasing group;

using a computer to identify, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product index, wherein the product information in the product index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

modifying the received purchasing data in the data structure to include data representing the identified product; and

processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step further includes:

determining whether the received purchasing data complies with predetermined purchasing data criteria defining data expected from the purchasing entity.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step further includes:

formatting the received purchasing data to comply with predetermined data storage requirements.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the product index further includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the product identifying step further includes:

determining, from the product index, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the product index.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of identifying the product based on the weight values further includes:

identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest weight value.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the method includes:

updating the weight values based on an accuracy determination of the corresponding associations.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the product identifying step further includes:

comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a plurality of product indexes, wherein each product index associates different portions of the received purchasing data with products; and

identifying the product related to the transaction based on the comparisons with the product information in each of the plurality of product indexes.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein each of the product indexes includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the identifying step further includes:

determining, from the product indexes, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the product indexes.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the step of identifying the product based on the weight values further includes:

combining the weight values for each determined product from each product index; and

identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest combined weight value.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the particular transaction;

modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified supplier; and

processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified supplier.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the step of identifying a supplier includes:

identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information stored in a supplier database.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the method further includes:

updating the supplier database with new supplier identification information about suppliers contained in the received purchasing data.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the supplier identifying step further includes:

comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information to determine a match based on at least one of the following matching criteria: (1) an exact

match between a portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information; or (2) a match of a predetermined portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the step of comparing the purchasing data includes determining a match based on at least one of the following supplier matching criteria: (1) a name of a supplier; (2) an acronym formed from a supplier's name; (3) an address or a portion of an address of a supplier; (4) a telephone or facsimile number of a supplier; or (5) an identification number assigned to a supplier.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein a plurality of the supplier matching criteria may be used to determine a match.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the step of identifying a supplier further includes:

assigning a supplier identification code corresponding to the identified supplier of each transaction; and

wherein the step of processing the modified purchasing data further includes the substep of sorting the transactions according to the assigned supplier identification code.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of processing the modified purchasing data further includes:

analyzing the modified purchasing data to summarize purchasing activity of the purchasing entity.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the product index associates products with information on suppliers included in the received purchasing data.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the product index associates products with textual information included in the received purchasing data.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the product index associates products with an identification code included in the received purchasing data.

21. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method includes the step of:

negotiating for purchases based on the processed modified purchasing data.

22. (Currently Amended) A computer for processing purchasing data, the computer comprising:

a memory having program instructions stored thereon; and

a processor, responsive to the ~~programming~~ program instructions, configured to:

receive purchasing data, from a purchasing entity that is a member of a purchasing group, wherein the purchasing data relates to accounting data associated with purchase transactions purchased by the purchasing entity, wherein the received purchasing data does not include data identifying each product corresponding to each transaction;

~~create a data structure for the purchasing data, including configured to~~
~~create~~ a first data structure for entity-level purchasing data and ~~to create~~ a second data structure for group-level purchasing data related to the purchasing group;

identify, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product index;

modify the received purchasing data in the data structure to include data representing the identified product; and

process the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.

23. (Original) The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine whether the received purchasing data complies with predetermined purchasing data criteria defining data expected from the purchasing entity.

24. (Original) The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:

format the received purchasing data to comply with predetermined data storage requirements.

25. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 22, wherein the product index further includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative

accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine, from the product index, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identify the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the product index.

26. (Original) The computer of claim 25, wherein the processor is further configured to:

identify the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest weight value.

27. (Original) The computer of claim 25, wherein the processor is further configured to:

update the weight values based on an accuracy determination of the corresponding associations.

28. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:

compare the received purchasing data with product information stored in a plurality of product indexes, wherein each product index associates different portions of the received purchasing data with products; and

identify the product related to the transaction based on the comparisons with the product information in each of the plurality of product indexes.

29. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 28, wherein each of the product indexes includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine, from the product indexes, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identify the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the product indexes.

30. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 29, wherein the processor is further configured to:

combine the weight values for each determined product from each product index; and

identify the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest combined weight value.

31. (Original) The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:

identify, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the particular transaction;

modify the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified supplier; and

process the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified supplier.

32. (Original) The computer of claim 31, wherein the processor is further configured to:

identify, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information stored in a supplier database.

33. (Original) The computer of claim 32, wherein the processor is further configured to:

update the supplier database with new supplier identification information about suppliers contained in the received purchasing data.

34. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

compare the received purchasing data with supplier identification information to determine a match based on at least one of the following matching criteria: (1) an exact match between a portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information; or (2) a match of a predetermined portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information.

35. (Original) The computer of claim 34, wherein the processor is further configured to determine a match based on at least one of the following supplier matching criteria: (1) a name of a supplier; (2) an acronym formed from a supplier's name; (3) an address or a portion of an address of a supplier; (4) a telephone or facsimile number of a supplier; or (5) an identification number assigned to a supplier.

36. (Original) The computer of claim 35, wherein the processor is further configured to use a plurality of the supplier matching criteria to determine a match.

37. (Original) The computer of claim 31, wherein the processor is further configured to:

assign a supplier identification code corresponding to the identified supplier of each transaction; and

sort the transactions according to the assigned supplier identification code.

38. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:

analyze the modified purchasing data to summarize purchasing activity of the purchasing entity.

39. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 22, wherein the product index associates products with information on suppliers included in the received purchasing data.

40. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 22, wherein the product index associates products with textual information included in the received purchasing data.

41. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 22, wherein the product index associates products with an identification code included in the received purchasing data.

42. (Original) The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:

negotiate for purchases based on the processed modified purchasing data.

43. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for processing purchasing data, the system comprising:

means for receiving purchasing data, from a purchasing entity that is a member of a purchasing group, wherein the purchasing data relates to accounting data associated with purchase transactions purchased by the purchasing entity;

means for creating a data structure for the purchasing data, including creating a first data structure for entity-level purchasing data and creating a second data structure for group-level purchasing data related to the purchasing group;

computer means for identifying, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product index, wherein the product information in the product index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

means for modifying the received purchasing data in the data structure to include data representing the identified product; and

means for processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, wherein the receiving means further includes:

means for determining whether the received purchasing data complies with predetermined purchasing data criteria defining data expected from the purchasing entity.

45. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the receiving means further includes:

means for formatting the received purchasing data to comply with predetermined data storage requirements.

46. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the product index further includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the product identifying means further includes:

means for determining, from the product index, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the product index.

47. (Original) The system of claim 46, wherein the computer means for identifying the product based on the weight values further includes:

means for identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest weight value.

48. (Original) The system of claim 46, wherein the system further includes:

means for updating the weight values based on an accuracy determination of the corresponding associations.

49. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the product identifying means further includes:

means for comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a plurality of product indexes, wherein each product index associates different portions of the received purchasing data with products; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction based on the comparisons with the product information in each of the plurality of product indexes.

50. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 49, wherein each of the product indexes includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the identifying means further includes:

means for determining, from the product indexes, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the product indexes.

51. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 50, wherein the means for identifying the product based on the weight values further includes:

means for combining the weight values for each determined product from each product index; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest combined weight value.

52. (Original) The system of claim 43, further comprising:

means for identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the particular transaction;

means for modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified supplier; and

means for processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified supplier.

53. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 52, wherein the means for identifying a supplier further includes means for identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information stored in a supplier database.

54. (Original) The system of claim 53, wherein the system further includes:
means for updating the supplier database with new supplier identification information about suppliers contained in the received purchasing data.

55. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 53, wherein the supplier identifying means further includes:

means for comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information to determine a match based on at least one of the following matching criteria: (1) an exact match between a portion of the received purchasing data with the

supplier identification information; or (2) a match of a predetermined portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information.

56. (Original) The system of claim 55, wherein the means for comparing the purchasing data includes means for determining a match based on at least one of the following supplier matching criteria: (1) a name of a supplier; (2) an acronym formed from a supplier's name; (3) an address or a portion of an address of a supplier; (4) a telephone or facsimile number of a supplier; or (5) an identification number assigned to a supplier.

57. (Original) The system of claim 56, wherein a plurality of the supplier matching criteria may be used to determine a match.

58. (Original) The system of claim 52, wherein the means for identifying a supplier further includes:

means for assigning a supplier identification code corresponding to the identified supplier of each transaction; and

wherein the means for processing the modified purchasing data further includes means for sorting the transactions according to the assigned supplier identification code.

59. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the means for processing the modified purchasing data further includes:

means for analyzing the modified purchasing data to summarize purchasing activity of the purchasing entity.

60. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the product index associates products with information on suppliers included in the received purchasing data.

61. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the product index associates products with textual information included in the received purchasing data.

62. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the product index associates products with an identification code included in the received purchasing data.

63. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the system further includes:
means for negotiating for purchases based on the processed modified
purchasing data.

64. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the purchasing data contains general ledger account information.

65. (Cancelled)

66. (Cancelled)

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the purchasing data includes aggregate purchasing data reflecting aggregate purchase transactions of the purchasing group.

68. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing purchasing data, the method comprising:

receiving purchasing data from a purchasing entity that is a member of a purchasing group, wherein the purchasing data relates to general ledger account information associated with purchase transactions made by the purchasing entity;

creating a data structure to store the received purchasing data, including creating a first data structure for entity-level purchasing data and creating a second data structure for group-level purchasing data related to the purchasing group;

using a computer to identify, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product index, wherein the product information in the product index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified product; and

processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.

69. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing purchasing data, the method comprising:

receiving purchasing data from a purchasing entity, wherein the purchasing entity is a member of a purchasing group, and wherein the purchasing data includes aggregate purchasing data reflecting aggregate purchase transactions of the purchasing group;

creating a data structure to store the received purchasing data, including creating a first data structure for entity-level purchasing data and creating a second data structure for group-level purchasing data related to the purchasing group;

using a computer to identify, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product index, wherein the product information in the product index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified product; and

processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.